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ABSTRACT

The research and evaluation consultant for the North Carolina Advisory Council on Vocational Education summarizes the position of the National Advisory Council based on their special 1974 report entitled "Report on Urban Vocational Education" supplemented by the annual reports from 1972 to 1975. Noting that the report summarizes hearings held in five different cities (Washington, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Houston, and Los Angeles) providing testimony about some innovative and exemplary programs, he notes the common concerns: (1) The development of career education, K-12, (2) the expectation that schools address broad social problems which do not have simple solutions, (3) the high unemployment rate among youth in cities, intensified by racial discrimination which is more serious in large cities, and by the flight of businesses to suburbs, (4) the low range of occupations offered by school vocational programs, (5) too few students being reached by vocational programs, (6) inadequate preparation of students in basic English and math, (7) females being kept out of high-paying fields, and (8) programs not meeting the needs of local employment markets. Recurrent themes from the testimony are said to indicate areas of special concern for improving urban vocational programs: Program expansion, funding, relevance of courses, coordination among employers and unions and schools, counseling and placement, image of vocational education, private schools, discrimination, and needs of handicapped students. Specific recommendations based on information gained through the hearings, substantiated by information from the reports of the state advisory councils, are listed for federal, state, and local levels. (JT)

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URBAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

A Summary of Recommendations by the National
Advisory Council on Vocational Education

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NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS/LOCAL REALITIES

Let me emphasize that I am not here today to speak for the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. I have been asked to summarize their position on Urban Vocational Education as I see it. While I feel that I understand their position fairly well, I do not represent them in any way.

* * * * *

It is easy to recognize that the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education sees urban vocational education as a critical issue. The most obvious indicator of this is that they have issued a special report entitled, Report on Urban Vocational Education, dated December 6, 1974. The report indicates a special concern -- the recognition that urban vocational education is characterized by special problems.

The Report on Urban Vocational Education contains many of the same remarks that NACVE has expressed in its annual reports in recent years. It is interesting, however, that in the urban report the commentary is much more succinct and precisely directed. Most noticeable is the difference in the tone of the writing. The sixth, seventh, and eighth annual reports of the Council, which deal with national issues in general, are couched to a much greater extent in the language of idealism.

For example, the sixth report of NACVE, entitled Counseling and Guidance: A Call for Change, begins with the sentence: "The prime legacy being left to today's youth is certainty of uncertainty." The seventh report, Vocational Student Organizations, begins with the sentence, "There is across the land a crisis of confidence in our educational system." In the eighth report one

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has to wait until the first sentence of the second paragraph before that kind of language begins. Here, we see mention of "a quiet revolution in American education" called career education.

In contrast, the National Council's treatment of urban vocational education is more obviously factual -- an attempt to summarize testimony of people who are familiar with the subject. The report does not necessarily reflect a lack of idealism, but the approach is noticeably different.

The report summarizes hearings held in five different large cities: Washington, D. C.; Pittsburg; Atlanta; Houston; and Los Angeles. It does not claim to represent all viewpoints about the problems of vocational education in urban areas; it does provide testimony about some innovative and exemplary programs and it identifies some common concerns in the large urban areas where hearings were held:

1. A common concern for the development of career education K-12 was reported.
2. Schools are expected to address broad social problems which don't have simple solutions.
3. There is a high unemployment rate among youth in cities, intensified by racial discrimination which is more serious in large cities, and by the flight of businesses to suburbs.
4. The range of occupations offered by school vocational education programs is too low.
5. Vocational programs reach too few students.
6. Students are not adequately prepared in basic English and math. .

7. Females are kept out of high-paying fields.
8. Programs are not meeting the needs of local employment markets.

The report recognized that each city had its unique problems and successes. NACVE took the position, however, that there were recurrent themes in the testimony heard in each of the five cities, and these recurrent themes indicate areas where we should show special concern for improving vocational education in our urban areas.

1. Program Expansion. There is greater demand for vocational training in cities than can be met with current faculty and facilities. In one city it was reported that only fourteen percent of the secondary school students were enrolled in vocational education. In another instance, a city school superintendent estimated that vocational education was reaching only a third of the students who needed it. NACVE summarized this concern for program expansion with the comment that it is "heartening" to see vocational education being recognized as a means of solving many of the economic problems of our society.
2. Funding. Complaints were heard in all cities about the lack of funds. Three kinds of funding problems were recognized as unique to urban areas:
 - a. Urban areas receive less funding than their share of population would warrant.
 - b. City schools face higher costs for basic expenses such as salaries, construction costs, maintenance, etc.

c. The cost of instructing each student is higher because cities have higher concentrations of disadvantaged youth.

3. Relevance of Courses. The report notes that too many students have been trained in fields where there are few or no jobs, and that the school systems are too slow in updating course content or adding new courses in fields where jobs exist.

4. Coordination Among Employers, Unions, and Schools.

In all five cities, need for closer cooperation between business and school was a dominant theme. Local advisory councils were reported as an effective means of ensuring adequate business and labor input into school planning. Special projects designed to give educators experience in the world of work and businessmen an awareness of the problems that exist in the classroom were also reported.

5. Counseling and Placement. The National Advisory Council's sixth annual report discussed nationwide problems related to guidance and career counseling. The hearings in these five cities indicated that the problems are intensified in urban areas:

- a. A common complaint was that counselors had unrealistic ideas about work, were ignorant of child labor laws, and were woefully unable to give effective counseling to minority groups.
- b. The ratio of counselors to students is too low.

- c. Placement and job follow-up is a critical need.
 - d. In all five cities there was a need to begin career counseling at a lower level in the school system and to base school experiences more directly on the needs of the world of work.
6. Image of Vocational Education. Although the image of vocational education is improving among parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors, there is still a stigma attached to it.
7. Private Schools. Not enough advantage has been taken of the private sector in vocational education. It was reported that programs offered by private schools often require less time for the achievement of employability skills, and private schools also frequently provide better opportunity for students to work while they are attending school.
8. Discrimination. Urban schools often do not adequately address the problems of sex and race discrimination in training, career counseling, and placement.
9. Needs of Handicapped Students. Handicapped students are often excluded from vocational education programs simply because counselors and teachers do not want them. Also, it was found that handicapped persons do not receive the benefit of as much effort to disseminate useful career information.

The Report on Urban Vocational Education concludes with recommendations for the federal, state, and local levels.

The recommendations are based on information gained through the urban hearings, substantiated by information taken from the reports of state advisory councils. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Federal: Recommendations for the federal level included
 - a. crash funding for vocational education in urban areas;
 - b. stiffening the legal requirement that the USOE monitor state plans to see that the intent of the law regarding set-asides is followed; and
 - c. two recommendations concerning the need for better data that would provide a sounder base for comparing cost and per-student funding among urban, suburban, and rural areas, and for analyzing enrollments by sex and race to provide for better assessment of discrimination patterns.
2. State: Two of the recommendations for state level had to do specifically with funding:
 - a. that state departments of education recognize that cities have special needs and that these needs must be given special consideration, and
 - b. that states should revise allocation formulas to reflect the needs of urban centers.

Three of the recommendations for the state level had to do with planning for the delivery of vocational education. They were:

- a. that the state planning mechanism more accurately reflect labor market needs, particularly in cities;

- b. that state legislation provide for using private schools to supplement public vocational education when that is the most efficient means to utilize public funds; and
- c. that plans address the need to make vocational education available to all city students who need it.

A final recommendation at the State level urged state advisory councils on vocational education to assist state boards in developing master plans that would meet the special needs of urban areas.

- 3. Local: Recommendations for the local level included:
 - a. That courses in city vocational education programs be continually updated and made relevant to the job market.
 - b. That city schools maintain better liaison with business and industry.
 - c. That race and sex discrimination be eliminated from vocational courses, career guidance, and placement.
 - d. That city schools commit themselves to providing job placement and follow-up counseling for all students who leave school.
 - e. That schools make a better effort to provide meaningful skill training for handicapped students.
 - f. That guidance and counseling for elementary and minority students be improved.
 - g. That support for youth organizations be increased.

In completing this report on urban vocational education, the Council makes frequent reference to other reports it has published. It makes the Council's position on urban vocational education a little clearer to briefly recall what two of these reports say.

First, the sixth Annual Report of the National Advisory Council, issued in June of 1972, called for a reform of school guidance and counseling. It held that the educational community was not meeting its responsibility to prepare young people for the adult world they face when they leave school. It cited the necessity for a person in today's civilization to be ready to adapt to change -- the only thing he could count on. It chided the educational community for what it called "shaky and shabby" practices that have resulted in a lack of relevance in education. It cited statistics on the number of students who drop out of high school and college each year, the relatively few students who are enrolled in high school vocational education programs, the disproportionate ratio of unemployed youth to unemployed adults, the disproportionate number of college students who are enrolled in liberal arts programs, and the general lack of attention that educators have paid to producing high school graduates who are employable.

The report identified various individuals and groups in the nation who have contributed to the situation. Counselor education institutions were taken to task because they required only one course in occupational guidance, even for graduate degrees. Congress was criticized because while it had called

for counseling and guidance in nineteen laws, it had not provided funds to support counseling and guidance in any of them. The report criticized administrators of vocational education programs, some of whom had been unwilling to use as much as four percent of their financial resources to support counseling and guidance services. It said that organized labor had neglected to establish a closer relationship with education in general, and with guidance in particular.

The Council acknowledged that there were no "magical solutions," but it urged some "obvious and urgent" reforms based on the problems and situations which the report outlined. It is quite easy to see that the Council's opinion about counseling and guidance as a part of school programs did not substantially change between the time it issued the sixth report and the time it issued the Report on Urban Vocational Education. Many of the recommendations are the same -- relevance of curriculum, coordination with the community, realistic training for counselors, placement and follow-up, etc.

The National Council has taken at least one other significant action to call attention to the need for change in counseling and guidance. In late April of 1975, the Council, along with the APGA and the AVA, called together a National Task Force to Implement Change in Guidance and Career Counseling. The meeting was held in Washington, D. C. It was an attempt to get people to stop talking so much about change and get started with the changing. Various kinds of activities to implement change in school guidance have resulted from this conference.

Mentioning this conference and the activities that resulted from it is a deviation from NACVE's recommendations about urban vocational education per se, but it may help to promote understanding of the attitude out of which the recommendations came.

The Council has followed through on its final recommendation in the Urban Vocational Education Report -- that support for youth organizations be increased -- by issuing its Seventh Annual Report on the subject of Vocational Student Organizations. This report makes very clear the Council's feeling that youth organizations are one way to lessen the disparity between what society needs and what our educational institutions are producing, and examining this report adds insight from a second viewpoint into the Council's position on urban vocational education.

In the 7th report, industry is cited as the principal source of opportunity, and industry is shown to be changing very rapidly. Education is not. In fact, American education is presented as being "insulated from change." Educational institutions are described as being "deliberately exempt from any market discipline." And, the report goes on to say that industry is beginning to recognize that one of the limits on its ability to maintain economic growth will be the lack of properly educated manpower.

The Council admits that it is easier to identify the "relevance gap" than it is to prescribe a comprehensive solution, but it maintains that "one part of the solution is perfectly clear: There must be direct daily involvement of industry in practically all phases of the educational enterprise." Vocational student youth organizations are seen as a "splendid, yet neglected, mechanism" to achieve this daily involvement.

Several barriers are seen to the additional development of youth organizations in the school structure. Among these are (a) school administrators' ignorance of the meaningful contribution that club activities can make to the educational development of youth and to the school's rapport with the industrial community it serves, (b) the resulting lack of assistance (and often deliberate interference) by school administrators, (c) less than satisfactory performance by USOE in stimulating the development of youth organizations by requiring their inclusion in state plans for vocational education, and (d) the "paralyzing myth" that education only happens in classrooms.

The 7th report concludes with several recommendations. The President of the United States is urged to give visibility to student organizations by suggesting appropriate legislation and by including support for student organizations in his budget proposals to the Congress. Congress is urged to recognize student organizations as integral and important in the instructional process by providing financial support for them. The U. S. Commissioner of Education is requested to support vocational student organizations by drawing federal guidelines for their inclusion in state plans for vocational education; by providing guaranteed set-asides for student organizations in the USOE budget; and most importantly by requiring teacher training institutions which receive federal funds to incorporate instruction in the methods, techniques, and philosophy of student organizations in their teacher education programs. An additional recommendation

is that schools make student organization programs available to students before they get to grade 10, to provide some assurance that drop-outs and early leavers may be exposed to student organizations before leaving school.

Positions taken by the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education with regard to urban vocational education were largely supported at the 1975 National Leadership Development Seminar for state directors of vocational education. In a paper presented to this seminar, Addison S. Hobbs, State Director of Vocational Education in Michigan, described five elements that he felt would positively affect vocational education in large cities. These elements were: attention to funding methodology, consideration of alternative delivery systems, establishment of placement services and follow-up of graduates, close and constant attention to maintaining a curriculum that is related to employment opportunities, and the need to establish and maintain facilities that are attractive to inner-city youth.

At the same conference, Mr. Donald V. Healas, Director of Vocational-Technical Education in the Cleveland Public Schools, spoke to the challenge that vocational education in a large city must meet. In his view, vocational education in a large city is challenged to:

1. Provide strong leadership so that large city vocational education programs can be flexible and versatile enough to meet the demands of a changing society.
2. Maintain an awareness program of the critical issues facing vocational education in large cities.

3. Maintain a communications network with supporting agencies both public and private.
4. Provide direct input regarding the critical issues of vocational education in large cities to the teacher education institutions.
5. Establish and maintain a "closed-loop system" with the business/industrial/labor communities.
6. Design and utilize a system for vocational education planning that involves the appropriate segments of society.

Notice that both Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Healas advocate some of the same things as the National Advisory Council. It shows that the Council's position is supported, at least in part, by some knowledgeable professionals.

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Let me conclude by saying that I think EPDA Fellows would really "miss the boat" if they didn't learn how to use and benefit from the activities of advisory councils. The information, assistance, and public support for programs that advisory councils can give is too valuable an asset for vocational education to do without. It's like the National Council's comment about school administrators who don't understand the value of youth clubs. They not only miss out on the contribution that clubs could make, but they use up their valuable time trying to figure out how to put effective barriers in the clubs' way.

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